



Council 4 AFSCME Testimony

Labor Committee

2/26/13

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative and political representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

**Council 4 supports:**

S.B. No. 905 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PORTAL-TO-PORTAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR MUNICIPAL AND STATE POLICE AND FIRE DISPATCHERS.

We request that you amend this bill to extend the same workers compensation portal protection to municipal and state fire dispatchers that is extended to fire fighters and police officers. Since dispatchers are necessary emergency personnel, this makes state statute consistent. Dispatchers are often ordered into work on an emergency fill in basis. Dispatchers must get to work in the midst of hurricanes, blizzards or other emergencies. They face the same hazards that firefighters and police officers face in this regard.

S.B. No. 907 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EMPLOYER'S NOTICE TO DISPUTE CERTAIN CARE DEEMED REASONABLE FOR AN EMPLOYEE UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

This is a reasonable bill. It states that if an employer is going to discontinue or block medical treatment for an employee that the employer must provide a notice and medical opinion for doing so.

**Council 4 opposes:**

S.B. No. 906 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DIRECT DEPOSIT OF WAGES.

We are not sure of the need for this bill as the state currently pays many employees through direct electronic payment to their bank accounts. If this bill has to do with paying state employees through pay cards, then Council 4 opposes it unless it is amended to prevent banks from charging fees for their use to the employee. A February 24, 2013 New York Times article states that Bank of America, Chase and other big banks are behind the pay day lending shops. This vitiates the argument that these banks use in pushing for pay cards as a way to protect employees from pay day lending institutions.

**Proposed H.B. No. 5533 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION RATE.**

MERS is fully funded. MERS has been in existence since 1947. There is no need to increase the retirement contribution of municipal workers. Many of these workers are barred from receiving Social Security. Municipalities have had to put higher amounts into MERS in the last few years, but over time the rate has been stable and the expectation is the rate will drop. Moreover, increasing the municipal employee contribution is unfair.

**Proposed H.B. No. 5701 AN ACT CONCERNING MONTHLY REDUCTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.**

It is both inadvisable and unfair to lower the unemployment compensation rate at a time of recession and high unemployment. The premise of this bill seems to be that unemployed people are lazy or not seeking work, and will only do so if their unemployment rate is lowered. The slow growth of jobs and unwillingness of banks and corporations to invest is more likely the cause of unemployment. The unemployed spend their unemployment checks on basic needs found on "Main Street" Consequently, cutting the payment creates the very real prospect of reducing retail jobs.

**Proposed H.B. No. 5703 AN ACT ELIMINATING LONGEVITY PAYMENTS FOR ALL STATE EMPLOYEES.**

The state has paid longevity payments to keep seasoned workers on the job. It is less costly to retain trained workers than to train new ones. Public sector work is often complicated. Experience is a significant benefit to the state and its citizens. This has been painfully demonstrated by the "erip" programs that have left the state without key personnel. Longevity payments reward loyalty. Loyal workers are more productive.